**2015 International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

Conference Room 1, UN Headquarters

Thursday, 3 December 2015

Organized by UN-DESA

**Theme: “Inclusion matters: Access and Empowerment for People of all Abilities”**

**Panel Discussion: “Accessible New Urban Agenda and Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities” [11.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.]**

**Background**

It is estimated that by 2050, 66% of the world’s population will be living in cities. Urban development brings both great opportunities and challenges. The needs, concerns and contributions of the world’s more than one billion persons with disabilities are too often neglected in urban planning, design and construction of cities. Inadequately planed and built urban environments are responsible for the widespread lack of access to built environments, from roads and housing, public buildings and spaces, to basic urban services, such as sanitation and water, health, education, transportation, and emergency response programmes.

Inclusive urban agenda needs promotion of accessibility. A lack of accessibility leads to disadvantages and vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, causing disproportionate rates of poverty, deprivation and exclusion. In addition, it contributes to a loss of socio-economic wellbeing of the entire community. Developing urban infrastructures, facilities and services that are designed and built following accessibility or inclusive “universal design” principles from initial stages of planning and design incurs additional costs equaling to approximately less than 1% of the total cost. The spillover benefits of accessibility go far beyond persons with disabilities to a much broader spectrum of the general population, from older persons to those with temporary injuries or mobility limitation such as mothers with children. Accessibility can be effectively promoted as a smart investment that contributes to sustainable and inclusive development.

World leaders recently adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development committing to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable. They also committed to organizing of the 3rd UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Human Settlement (Habitat III) to review progress and design a New Urban Agenda. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Habitat III present with an opportunity to discuss how best to operationalize the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and relevant targets to make sure that urban development will be sustainable, accessible and inclusive of all urban dwellers and visitors including those with disabilities.

**Objective of the panel discussion**

In observation of this year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities, on 3 December 2015, at the headquarters of the United Nations, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the cooperation and support from Governments, UN Habitat and other stakeholders, will organise a panel discussion to review the current policy and practices and how they deal with accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities, identify challenges that cities face in making urban development to be more accessible and inclusive, and based on sharing good practices, the panellists will explore and present strategic and action-oriented options for operationalizing the 2030 Agenda as well as specific recommendations as contributions to the Habitat III and its outcome New Urban Agenda.

In addition, the panel will provide an opportunity for calling actions and multi stakeholders’ partnership among Governments, the UN, urban planning and disability communities leaders and professionals, academic institutions, development partners and private sectors to actively involve and work together in promoting accessible and disability inclusive New Urban Agenda.

**Questions suggested to panellists and participants for consider and respond in their discussion:**

1. What major challenges exist in current urban policies and practices in terms of ensuring accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in urban development?

2. What shall be done and by whom in order to achieve the SDGs goal 11 in terms of ensuring inclusive and accessible public spaces, housing and urban transportation for all urban dwellers?

3. From a perspective of disability, what “New Urban Agenda” do we want? Any specific recommendations you like to propose to UN Habitat III as to how to further advance accessibility and disability inclusion in urban development (in areas such as urban design and planning, standards and regulation, institutional setting, resources mobilization, etc.)